

Adair County Courthouse
Courthouse Square
Stilwell
Adair County
Oklahoma

HABS No. OK-32

HABS
OKLA
1-5716
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ADAIR COUNTY COURTHOUSE

HABS No. OK-32

Location: Courthouse Square, Stilwell, Adair County, Oklahoma.

USGS Stilwell West Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 15/352840/3964370

Present Owner: County of Adair, Oklahoma.

Present Use: Courts and offices of Adair County.

Significance: Oklahoma experienced its first real building boom with the discovery and intense exploitation of oil in the early 20th century, especially the 1920s. One of the most dominant architectural styles was Art Deco. The cities of Oklahoma City and Tulsa once had great numbers of structures in this style, both large and small, covering a wide range of types and situations. These are largely gone, especially the major structures. The buildings of the smaller towns, such as Stilwell, were influenced by the large metropolitan centers in regard to style, and a surprising number of these may be found in remote rural areas. The courthouse of Adair County at Stilwell is a prime example of this. The details of the structure are characteristic of this style of architecture, much of which is largely unaltered.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: According to a cornerstone, the construction date is 1931.
2. Architect: J.J. Haralson, A.I.A., of Oklahoma City, was the architect for the design of the courthouse. In 1926 he received his license to practice architecture in Oklahoma. He had offices in both Muskogee, Oklahoma and Fort Smith, Arkansas, and had a partnership with Ralph O. Matt. Haralson died in 1955.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Reference to property records described below is to the Office of the Clerk of Adair County, Adair County Courthouse, Stilwell, Oklahoma. The first deed on record was not found.

1908 Patent
 Lot 2 Block 39, Town of Stilwell
 Cherokee Nation
 to
 James M. Kittridge
 8 June 1908
 Recorded 4 August 1908, Book 9, page 96

1910 Quitclaim Deed
 Lot 2
 Floretta Kittridge
 to
 Ruby Northrop
 26 May 1910
 Recorded 5 July 1910 Book 9, page 190

1911 Warrant Deed
 Lot 2
 Floretta Kittridge
 to
 Ruby Northrop
 9 June 1911
 Recorded 20 July 1911 Book 9, page 377

1916 Warrant Deed \$600
 Lot 3
 Mark L. Bacon
 to
 A.B. Rivers
 9 May 1916
 Recorded 19 May 1916 Book 20, page 317

 Deed
 Lot 3
 Curtis J. Crocker
 to
 A.B. Rivers
 9 May 1916
 Recorded 25 May 1916 Book 20, page 323

 Warrant Deed
 Lot 2
 Cora Kittridge
 to
 Harry Winsor
 15 November 1916
 Recorded 2 December 1920 Book 31, page 126

ADAIR COUNTY COURTHOUSE
HABS No. OK-32 (Page 3)

- 1919 Warrant Deed Lot 3
 A.B. Rivers and Leila G. Rivers
 to
 Adair County
 11 September 1919 Recorded 4 October 1920
 Book 32, page 326
- 1920 Warrant Deed
 Lot 2
 Harry Winsor
 to Albert Carlson
 2 October 1920
 Recorded 4 October 1920 Book 31, page 66
- Deed
 Lot 2 \$600
 Albert Carlson
 to
 Adair County
 8 November 1920
 Recorded 8 November 1920, Book 32, page 379
- Deed
 Lot 2
 Cora Kittridge
 to
 I.M. Clevinger
 30 November 1920
 Recorded 1 December 1920 Book 32, page 419
- 1921 Deed
 Lot 2
 J.M. Clevinger
 to
 Adair County
 15 January 1921
 Recorded 15 January 1921 Book 24, page 533
- 1927 Deed
 Lot 1
 Alene Tucker (nee Johnson), et al
 to
 Adair County, 12 May 1927
 Recorded 23 July 1927, Book 18, page 306

4. Contractor: J.H. Reddick.
5. Alterations and additions: The building has not been substantially altered since its construction, except in that the windows have recently been closed, partially, with glass block. Some lighting has been changed in the office.

- B. Historical Context: The courthouse was built to replace a predecessor which burned on Christmas of 1929. It has always been used as a courthouse since its 1931 construction.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Adair County Courthouse is a well-preserved example of the Art Deco style with native Indian head motifs. This style of architecture was popular in Oklahoma during the 1920s with the development of oil resources.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The three-story, rectangular-shaped building measures 100'x65', with nine bays across its front and six bays along its side, with another two bays in the single-story rear wing.
2. Foundations: The foundations are of concrete, poured in place. Smooth coursed finish blocks of concrete provide the facing for the basement story above ground level.
3. Walls: The walls of the building are of yellow pressed brick with white mortar, and white cast concrete lintels and trim. Beneath the second floor windows of the principal block is a wide Vitruvian wave belt course of cast concrete panels. The second and third floor windows on all four facades are flanked by fluted pilasters, also of cast concrete panels. A concrete band, with the words, "Adair County Courthouse," runs across the front facade at third floor level.
4. Structural system, framing: The building is essentially a brick bearing wall structure with poured reinforced concrete slab floors supported by steel beams and interior columns.
5. Porches: Eight concrete steps stretch across the equally wide front porch of concrete, before the three center bays of the principal (north) facade. Both the sides of the stairs and the sides of the porch are enclosed by piers with smooth concrete face-blocks which match those of the basement. Concrete window-wells are provided in front of the basement windows, and a concrete cradle for the oil tank has been provided on the south side of the building.

6. Chimneys: There is one chimney, and it is about 10 feet square and of yellow brick matching the walls. It rises about 10 feet above the flat roof between the fifth and sixth bay from the east along the south wall.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The front door, in the center bay of the front porch, is a narrow stile aluminum frame with gray tinted glass replacement. To either side, the doorways have been filled-in with glass block. All three of the original doorway enframements remain, however. They are of cast concrete panels, with scroll bas-relief and center lintel panel of Indian head design. The single side door, in the sixth bay on the east facade, at ground level, is identical to the front door, and it is identically framed. (The second side door, which would have been exactly in the same place on the west facade, has been replaced with tile facing, and it would have provided access to the County Welfare Department building, a single-story building immediately adjacent.)
 - b. Windows: The windows of the basement, first and second floors have glass blocks for lights, over horizontally hung aluminum cased windows. A six-over-one arrangement is used in the basement windows, twelve-over-two in the first floor windows and twenty eight (7 courses deep and 4 columns wide)-over-two arrangement in the second floor windows. On the third floor, vertically hung twin steel casement sash are used, each with eight lights. The prisoner's cell windows on the south and east walls at the third floor level have bars on the inside and wire mesh cages on the outside, screwed to the outside wall.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The roof is flat, beneath a low parapet wall, and drains to the rear.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: There are no eaves. The cornice is of cast concrete panels, such as those which are used around the doorway, with scrolls and Indian heads, capped with yet another series of Vitruvian wave panels. Box gutters and round aluminum downspouts drain the roof, running from just below the cornice on the south facade to the ground.
 - c. Radio tower: A radio tower of aluminum tubing, perhaps 60 feet high, is attached to the south wall.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The front door, in the center bay of the north facade, at first floor level, opens into a wide central corridor which is flanked by offices. The rear end of this corridor leads to a transverse corridor which is on the rear wall of the main block. To the right of the central corridor is the County Court Clerk's Office, with its vault alongside the corridor, which is accessible only from the south wall of the Clerk's office. Behind these two rooms is a narrow service corridor, which runs parallel to the central corridor, and which leads to the transverse corridor near the staircases at the ends of the latter. This service corridor provides a rear exit for the Court Clerk's Office, but more importantly it services the Associate District Judge's Office, in the northwest corner of the building, and the Election Board Office, midway along the exterior west wall. On the left of the central corridor is the County Treasurer's Office, and its vault likewise accessible only from its office. The County Treasurer also occupies the room directly behind this office, in the extreme northeastern corner of the building. Again, both this room and the Sheriff's Office, which is adjacent, midway along the exterior east wall, are served by another narrow service corridor leading to the rear. At the end of the central corridor, along the transverse corridor (actually in the single story rear wing) are the three offices and the vault of the County Clerk.

The stairs at both ends of the transverse corridor lead to the second floor. Here another transverse corridor stretches along the rear wall and two narrow service corridors, directly over those on the first floor, divide the large courtroom in the center of the building, from the offices of the District Judge along the west wall, and the offices of the District Attorney on the east wall. At the end of these two service corridors are the men's and ladies' rooms.

The smaller flight of stairs, one on either side of the transverse corridor, near its junctures with the service corridors, lead to the third floor jail, which is actually wrapped around three sides of the upper half of the courtroom. Approached by the stairs on the east (the west stairs are used only for fireescape purposes), the jail is essentially a series of cages along the south and west walls, with the gallery and jailer's quarters along the east walls. All these rooms are connected by a single-loaded corridor on the inside, around the courtroom. Beginning in the northeast corner of the building and going south, there is the jailer's room, with his shower at the end of the corridor (obviously stacked over the ladies' room below on the second floor), the gallery, the entrance from the

second floor, a prisoner's shower, and two solitary confinement cells in the southeast corner. Continuing west, there is the "bullpen," (a sleeping area for Saturday night drunks), and several bunk detention bays. In the southwest corner is the women's cellroom, and its rest room (originally designed for men). Along the west wall are two juvenile cells, one for girls and one for boys. In the basement, which is accessible from the staircases at the ends of the transverse corridor on the first floor, there is another transverse corridor with two service corridors. The three offices of the County School Superintendent are underneath those of the County Clerk in the basement of the rear wing. Along the west wall are the men's room, the furnace and maintenance rooms, and along the east wall are the ladies room, the County Agent's Office and the County Surveyor's Office. In between, beneath the central corridor upstairs, are the County Assessor's Office on the right, and the County Agricultural Extension Agent's Office on the left.

2. Stairways: The principal stairways between the basement, first and second floors have terrazzo treads and risers with cast bronze balustrade screens and a metal handrail. These are open-well, two-and-a half flight arrangements. The secondary staircases, which are much narrower, extend from the basement to the third floor. These are also two-and-a half flight stairs. They have sheet metal treads and risers, with poured concrete overtreads, and are painted gray. The elevator adjacent to the east stairs, electrically powered, has been inoperative for some time (and was inaccessible). Its shaftway extended from the basement to the third floor, which was the jail entrance.
3. Flooring: The basement floor is concrete finished, with the exception of the County School Superintendent's Office, which has been covered with red carpeting. The principal corridors of the first floor have a gray terrazzo floor. The offices and the service corridors all have linoleum block floors, and the vaults have concrete floors. In the Court Clerk's Office and the Associate District Judge's Office the linoleum block floors have been overlaid with yellow carpeting. The second floor likewise has a gray terrazzo floor in the transverse corridor with linoleum block elsewhere, with the exception of the area beyond the courtroom railing, which is also covered with yellow carpeting. The third floor has a concrete floor throughout, painted gray.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls and ceilings of most rooms are finished in plaster, painted green or white, on expanded metal lath. There are several exceptions: in the basement, a partition wall, of concrete block painted white, which separates the County Agricultural Extension Agent's office from

the County Assessor's Office. On the first floor, marble facing has been applied to the lower half of the walls of the principal corridors, and this treatment has been extended to the stairways and the second floor transverse corridor. Also, on the second floor, the ceiling of the courtroom has been changed to a dropped acoustical panel ceiling. The walls of the cells on the third floor have been badly damaged due to prisoner abuse: the plaster in some cases has been entirely stripped off, leaving the exposed brick which was behind.

5. Doorways and doors: The doors and doorways of the building are almost all original. They have assymetrically molded trim enframing either a single pane-over-single panel door, or a double panel door, the panes and panels all being square. The vaults all have steel frames and steel barred safe doors. The courtroom has taller wooden doors of three panels, all square, in keeping with the original height of the room. The jail has a sheet metal steel door in a plain steel frame.
6. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: An oil fed boiler in the basement provides steam heat through a system of radiators throughout the building. Cooling is by means of a number of window unit air conditioners.
 - b. Lighting: The original incandescent lighting fixtures remain in the principal corridors. These are single bulbs with tiered polygonal glass reflectors. Some flourescent lighting has been installed in the offices. These are twin tube fixtures approximately 48 inches in length. In the Courtroom, recessed twin tube flourescent fixtures with plastic lenses have been installed in the acoustical panel ceiling.
 - c. Plumbing: Most of the fixtures, such as the flush tank commodes and oval bowl sinks of the men's and women's rooms appear to be original fixtures. The siphon jet commodes of the jail cells on the third floor, however, are replacements.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: The courthouse is built in the center of a half block, just off the intersecion of the two principal streets in town. It is surrounded on the west and north by commercial buildings and on the south and east by religious and residential structures, all lower in height. A row of trees extends to the street from the left hand side entrance, in part shading the alley parking lot which extends behind the

building. A sidewalk, about four feet wide, surrounds the property, and approaches the front stairs.

2. Outbuilding: An octagonal bandstand, approximately 20 feet in diameter of lightweight aggregate-concrete block on a poured concrete floor and octogonal gray shingle roof, has been constructed on the northwest corner of the lot.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATON

Property deed records. Adair County Courthouse, Stilwell, Oklahoma.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in cooperation with the Oklahoma Historical Society and the Cherokee National Historical Society. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed during the summer of 1975, at the HABS Field Office on the campus of Northeastern Oklahoma State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma, by Michael A. Tomlan (Cornell University), Project Supervisor; John D. Hnedak (Cornell University), Project Historian; Bethanie C. Grashof (University of Florida), Vicki J. Higgins (University of Cincinnati), Nicholas H. Holmes III (Auburn University) and Roger D. Swayze (University of Oregon), student assistant architects. The written descriptive data was edited for permanent HABS collection at the Library of Congress by Susan McCown, a HABS staff historian in the Washington, D.C. office, in the winter of 1981. Walter Smalling, Jr. of Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, U.S. Department of the Interior took the documentary photos of the building in October of 1979.